

a successful businessman in the city of Houston. With all this great history for the Astros franchise it would be hard to take the team to a new level, but this current squad of players has done it.

When this current team entered Spring Training there were great hopes that this Astros team would be amongst the best in our history. With the addition of hometown star pitchers Andy Petite and Roger Clemens there was no reason to believe that the Astros couldn't compete for a championship. This team never gave up; they never looked at the standings and thought their hopes and that of their fans were futile. No, instead this team took one game at a time and slowly built up momentum. First there was a four-game winning streak to get the Astros back to a .500 record. Then in early September, the Astros won 12 straight games to pull even in the race for the National League Wild Card. Yet, somehow they still had another gear left in them and they became baseball's hottest team down the stretch. The Astros won the final seven games of the regular season and nine of their last 10 to overcome Chicago and San Francisco in the race for the Wild Card. From Aug. 14 to the end of the regular season, the Astros had a major league-best 36-10 record. The Astros currently have an amazing 18-game home winning streak, the longest such streak in baseball in the last 10 years. While this streak is extraordinary, it's not hard to see why the Astros do so well at home. This year the Astros set a franchise record for attendance with over 3 million fans coming to watch baseball in beautiful Minute Maid Park. Clearly, the great fans of Houston are the tenth man on the field, the ones who have cheered our Astros on to victory.

I am so proud of this year's team because of how they overcame adversity this year. Despite the high expectations and the early season troubles this team never got down on itself, like true Texans they lifted themselves up off the dirt and played to their potential. Much of the credit for this year's success should go to Astros owner Drayton McLane who assembled this current team and has been such a great franchise owner in Houston for many years. Also, the work of Astros Manager Phil Garner to resurrect this team will go down in baseball legend. He came in to a very difficult situation, one in which most others are content to mediocrity, but instead he decided to lead. His calming influence and superior baseball knowledge gave the players the confidence to go out on the field and succeed day in and day out.

For the last decade the heart and soul of the Astros franchise has been Jeff Bagwell and Craig Biggio and this year is no different. Both players have been perennial All-Stars and have won numerous awards over their long careers, but their leadership in the clubhouse is what makes them such great Astros, there is no doubt that one day both of their uniforms will be retired in Minute Maid Park. I also want to recognize the great Roger Clemens, who undoubtedly will go down as one of the greatest pitchers of all time. He has been many things over his illustrious career, he started out as Boston Red Sox, then a Toronto Blue Jay, and then as a New York Yankee, but no matter what uniform he was wearing his heart was always in Houston. This year he postponed his retirement to help his hometown Astros try to win a World Series,

with an astounding 18-4 record this year he has clearly helped pitch the Astros into the playoffs. This Astros season, especially their comeback from the bottom of the division has been a total team effort.

This inspiring team is now in the National League Division Series against the Atlanta Braves. They have already managed to take one of two games from the Braves in this best of five series and gain the home field advantage. With all due respect to my colleagues from Atlanta, I have to say that I am confident the Astros can finish off the Braves at home in Houston this weekend. Because the one advantage this team has that fewer others can claim is that if their backs are against the wall in these playoffs you know this team will never quit. It is that inspiring spirit that has many of us Houstonians dreaming of a World Series Championship.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. PEARCE). The Chair will recognize Members for Special Order speeches without prejudice to further legislative business.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TURNER of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

SMART SECURITY AND THE "BACKDOOR DRAFT"

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I am sad to say that the military draft is alive and well in the United States of America. But, this time, it is the Bush administration's shameful behind-the-scenes version: a "backdoor draft," specifically targeting soldiers who have already served and poor young men and women from rural areas who enlisted because the military helped them pay for a college education they would not have been able to get otherwise.

Since the war in Iraq began, the Bush administration has done everything in its power to cajole and deceive soldiers into serving longer than they want or longer than they agreed to.

Depending on members of the Army Reserve and National Guard, who almost always serve the country only here at home in the United States, to serve in Iraq was just the tip of the iceberg. This administration has also started the shameful policy of issuing "stop loss" orders, which allowed the military to break its contractual obligations to a service member in order to keep that soldier in the military for longer than he or she has agreed. They have resorted to the shameful policy of recruiting the "ready reserve," a group of retired soldiers, who, after completing their years of service, agreed to serve their country should a national emergency arise.

I have got news for the President. Our invasion of a country that never threatened us, did not have weapons of mass destruction or even a weapons of mass destruction program, and did not have links to al Qaeda, does not qualify as a national emergency.

These shameful Bush administration policies all add up to a "backdoor draft," a means for the administration to dishonestly and dishonorably force soldiers who have already served their country to be serving now or to force soldiers to serve 6 or even 12 months longer than they agreed to. In fact, many soldiers have been manipulated into extending their contracts with the Army. They have been warned that if they do not reenlist on time, their brigade could be shipped to Iraq or Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time that President Bush and his fellow Republicans have pursued an all-too-real "backdoor draft," just this week, the House Republican leadership placed on the schedule under the suspension calendar a controversial bill to reimplement the draft. The suspension calendar, of course, and we all know this, is reserved for noncontroversial legislation. The reimplementing of the draft is hardly noncontroversial, and surely, it should be subject to hearings and expert testimony.

The administration must assess the military's recruitment and retention rates, the military's manpower needs, and the extent to which our troops are overextended in the field. The American people deserve better than this.